

Claims

1. A system for printing postal indicia at more than one location, said system comprising a host and more than one customer station, the host comprising at least one postal security device, said postal security device comprising a secure housing, cryptographic means, and nonvolatile memory, the nonvolatile memory comprising an accounting register indicative of postage value;

each said customer station comprising a television, a set-top box communicatively coupled with the television, a remote control communicatively coupled with the set-top box, and a printer communicatively coupled with the set-top box, said printer disposed to print labels;

said host and each customer station communicatively coupled;

said system further comprising means responsive to information provided by a customer at one of said customer locations via the remote control for ordering enhanced television services at the television;

said system further comprising means responsive to information provided by the customer at the remote control at one of said customer stations for sending to the host a first message requesting a postal indicium and identifying the customer station associated therewith, means responsive to the first message for presenting to the postal security device a request for the postal indicium; means responsive to the generation by the postal security device of a second message indicative of the postal indicium for transmitting information indicative of the postal indicium to the set-top box; and means responsive to said information indicative of the postal indicium for causing said printer to print said postal indicium on a label;

said system further comprising accounting means within said host storing information indicative of postage value printed at each of said customer stations; and means responsive to the message identifying the customer station for modifying the stored information associated with the customer station within said accounting means;

said postal security device disposed to make a record in its nonvolatile memory indicative of the postage value communicated in said postal indicium.

2. A method for printing postal indicia at more than one location, said method used with a system comprising a host and more than one customer station, the host comprising at least one postal security device, said postal security device comprising a secure housing, cryptographic means, and nonvolatile memory, the nonvolatile memory comprising an accounting register indicative of postage value; each said customer station comprising a television, a set-top box communicatively coupled with the television, a remote control communicatively coupled with the set-top box, and a printer communicatively coupled with the set-top box, said printer disposed to print labels; said host and each customer station communicatively coupled; said system further comprising accounting means within said host storing information indicative of postage value printed at each of said customer stations; said method comprising the steps of:

providing information at one of said customer locations via the remote control relating to a requested postal indicium;

sending to the host a first message requesting the postal indicium and identifying the customer station associated therewith;

presenting to the postal security device a request for the postal indicium;

generating by the postal security device a second message indicative of the postal indicium;

making a record in the nonvolatile memory of the postal security device indicative of the postage value communicated in said postal indicium;

transmitting information indicative of the postal indicium to the set-top box;

responding to said information indicative of the postal indicium by causing said printer to

print said postal indicium on a label; and

modifying the stored information in the accounting means associated with the customer station indicative of the postage value communicated in said postal indicium.

5 3. A system for printing postal indicia at more than one location, said system comprising a host and more than one customer station, the host comprising at least one postal security device, said postal security device comprising a secure housing, cryptographic means, and nonvolatile memory, the nonvolatile memory comprising an accounting register indicative of postage value;

10 each said customer station comprising a fax machine and a printer communicatively coupled with the fax machine, said printer disposed to print labels; said fax machine communicatively coupled with the public switched telephone network;

said host and each customer station communicatively coupled;

each said fax machine further comprising means responsive to incoming fax telephone calls for receiving and printing fax messages;

15 said system further comprising means responsive to information provided by the customer at one of said customer stations for sending to the host a first message requesting a postal indicium and identifying the customer station associated therewith, means responsive to the first message for presenting to the postal security device a request for the postal indicium; means responsive to the generation by the postal security device of a second message
20 indicative of the postal indicium for transmitting information indicative of the postal indicium to the fax machine; and means responsive to said information indicative of the postal indicium for causing said printer to print said postal indicium on a label;

said system further comprising accounting means within said host storing information indicative of postage value printed at each of said customer stations; and means responsive to

the message identifying the customer station for modifying the stored information associated with the customer station within said accounting means;

said postal security device disposed to make a record in its nonvolatile memory indicative of the postage value communicated in said postal indicium.

5 4. A method for printing postal indicia at more than one location, said method used with a
 ✓ system comprising a host and more than one customer station, the host comprising at least
 one postal security device, said postal security device comprising a secure housing,
 cryptographic means, and nonvolatile memory, the nonvolatile memory comprising an
 accounting register indicative of postage value; each said customer station comprising a fax
 0 machine communicatively coupled with the public switched telephone network; a printer
 communicatively coupled with the fax machine, said printer disposed to print labels; said
 host and each customer station communicatively coupled; said system further comprising
 accounting means within said host storing information indicative of postage value printed at
 each of said customer stations; said method comprising the steps of:

providing information at one of said customer locations via the fax machine relating to a requested postal indicium;

sending to the host a first message requesting the postal indicium and identifying the customer station associated therewith;

presenting to the postal security device a request for the postal indicium;

20 generating by the postal security device a second message indicative of the postal indicium;

making a record in the nonvolatile memory of the postal security device indicative of the postage value communicated in said postal indicium;

transmitting information indicative of the postal indicium to the fax machine;

responding to said information indicative of the postal indicium by causing said printer to print said postal indicium on a label; and

modifying the stored information in the accounting means associated with the customer station indicative of the postage value communicated in said postal indicium.

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